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DOJ FOR A/G MUKASEY; DHS FOR SEC. CHERTOFF

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [CVIS](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [ASEC](#) [OVIP](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR A/G MUKASEY AND DHS CHERTOFF VISIT
TO SLOVENIA, MARCH 12-13

REF: A. LJUBLJANA 107
[1](#)B. LJUBLJANA 41

Classified By: CDA Maryruth Coleman for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: We are looking forward to your visit. You will be the first USG Cabinet level visitors to Slovenia since it assumed the EU Presidency at the beginning of this year, and your meetings and events during your stay should bolster our already close ties with this country. From the outset, Slovenia has stressed that it wants to have a successful U.S.-EU Summit and is eager to identify appropriate JHA issues as possible deliverables. During its first two months as EU President, Slovenia has focused on the Western Balkans, brokering the EU's response following Kosovo's February 17 declaration of independence. Because of its small overseas presence, Slovenia looks to larger EU member states, particularly France and Germany, to drive the EU debate in many foreign policy areas. Slovenia hosted a successful U.S.-EU Justice and Home Affairs informal senior level meeting January 9-10, which covered a full range of transatlantic law enforcement and internal security issues. However, the EU's displeasure over the U.S. conducting negotiations bilaterally over Visa Waiver Program (VWP) Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), which recently came to a head with the Czech Republic's signing of an MOU, has put Slovenia in an awkward position. Although Slovenia has enjoyed the benefits of the visa waiver program since 1997, it must balance the competing interests of the membership. Results of the March 5 COREPER meeting will play a large part in the EU's approach to the JHA Ministerial. However, Slovenia has assured us that it would not allow the VWP issue to hijack the Ministerial and Slovenia, like us, eagerly anticipates your visit. END SUMMARY.

Setting the Stage for the U.S.-EU Summit

[1](#)2. (C) In June 2001, in his first trip abroad after assuming office, President Bush visited Slovenia to meet Russian President Putin for the first time. Slovenia now looks forward to his return visit for the June 9-10 U.S.-EU Summit, although Slovenia, the EU and the U.S. have not yet announced the dates publicly. Slovenia is focused on hosting a successful Summit. In its search for deliverables, it will take a forward-leaning position and push forward where it

thinks there can be real progress. It has identified the JHA area as a possible source for Summit achievements and shares our view that the VWP controversy should not overshadow all other areas of potential progress.

13. (C) Developing a common understanding on data privacy principles involving the sharing of law enforcement information is an important objective for the Slovenian Presidency. Under its chairmanship, the High Level Contact Group experts' talks have made considerable progress, and Interior Minister Mate told Charge March 5 that this is an achievable goal for the Summit (ref A). We should continue to maintain a forward-leaning position at the Ministerial to get commitment from all sides to conclude the talks and deliver concrete results by the Summit. Other key issues at the Ministerial that could mature into Summit deliverables include deeper U.S.-EU cooperation in the Southeast European Coordination Initiative against Transborder Organized Crime, sharing information on linkages between narcotics trafficking and terrorism, and progress on signings of the Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition Agreements.

Visa Waiver Program

14. (C) Slovenia has enjoyed the benefits of the visa waiver program since 1997. When the program received renewed close scrutiny in the aftermath of 9/11, Slovenia moved quickly to address any lingering concerns we may have had, including advancing the launch of its new machine-readable passport by several months. Now, as EU President, Slovenia finds itself in the awkward position of supporting an EU line critical of our efforts to broaden the program by negotiating MOUs bilaterally with VWP aspirants. As Presidency, Slovenia is

concerned at the potential of VWP to split EU solidarity and divide the Member States. Slovenia hopes to see progress in expansion of VWP, but is concerned that not all EU aspirant countries will be able to qualify during the narrow window available. The March 5 COREPER Ambassadors adopted the Slovenian Presidency's paper outlining an approach that would try to protect the equities of the EU and the member states.

Kosovo Dominates Slovenia's EU Presidency - So Far

15. (C) Well before Slovenia assumed the EU's Presidency, it anticipated that Kosovo would be the most prominent external issue it would face during its six-month term. Slovenian officials strived to build EU unity in the lead-up to Kosovo's February 17 Coordinated Declaration of Independence (CDI) by publicly playing up its neutrality on the issue, while working behind the scenes with us and key EU member states to assure a successful CDI. Slovenia's Foreign Minister Rupel told us he was proud and relieved that Slovenia was able to broker the often contentious EU debate over the final language in the EU's statement following Kosovo's independence. In mid February, Slovenia guided the EU to authorize a European Security and Defense Policy (EULEX) mission to Kosovo. Slovenia recognized Kosovo on March 5.

Western Balkan Focus for JHA Issues

16. (SBU) Slovenia's focus on Western Balkan issues extends into JHA affairs. At the EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs senior level meeting in early January, Slovenian Ministries of Justice and Interior officials also highlighted the Western Balkan emphasis of Slovenia's presidency. They noted that the EU would be preparing a threat assessment for the region, and expressed interest in cooperating with the U.S. on fighting terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and illegal migration. Other significant JHA meetings during Slovenia's presidency (in Brussels) include the U.S.-EU Committee on Terrorism (COTER) Troika May 22-23, and a U.S.-EU-Canada Trilateral meeting addressing consular and document fraud issues June 22.

Concerns about the Slovenian Press

¶17. (C) Press reports of a leaked MFA memo outlining a late-December conversation between senior Slovene and U.S. officials have complicated U.S.-Slovenian relations. Press reports charged that the U.S. had issued "demands" that Slovenia be the first country to recognize Kosovo following the CDI. This story has been kept alive by the media, which opposes the government, as well as by the MFA's somewhat clumsy attempts to track down the source of the leak. The story's message of the U.S. bullying Slovenia and making demands could reverberate as JHA issues arise.

Resources Stretched Thin

¶18. (C) Slovenia is the first of the EU's newest members to hold its Presidency. Due to Slovenia's small size (a population of just over 2 million) and limited leadership experience within the EU, it has relied heavily on the council secretariat in Brussels and on larger EU member states - particularly Germany and France, which takes over the EU presidency from Slovenia in July, for policy and logistical support. Human resources at the Slovene MFA have been stretched thin during its presidency (the head of the MFA division for Asia and the Pacific, for example, covers all of Asia, including Burma, Pakistan, China, etc., with a staff of six).

Domestic Political Update

¶19. (C) The predominantly center-right ruling coalition is likely to remain in power for the duration of the EU Presidency, but political machinations by the several opposition parties could become a distraction. The ruling coalition and several opposition parties signed a cooperation agreement going into the presidency pledging to avoid political squabbles during Slovenia's six-month term. Despite the agreement, some of the opposition parties have called for the resignation of the Environment, Foreign and Interior ministers. However, Interior Minister Mate has successfully deflected calls for his resignation and looks to be safe in his position for the rest of the EU Presidency, as is Foreign Minister Rupel. Former President and former Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek died on February 16 after a long fight with cancer.

A New U.S. Ambassador

¶10. (SBU) The White House has named Michigan businessman Yousif Ghafari to the Post, but the Senate has not scheduled a confirmation hearing date. Slovenian officials may ask if you have any inside information from the White House.

COLEMAN